

Lake County communities lead way for shared services deal

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Local governments in Lake County are leading the way in Ohio to become the first to establish a countywide public works sharing and use program.

The initiative is spearheaded by Ohio Auditor Dave Yost's office and will enable communities to share capital equipment and other resources as a way to potentially save money.

During a news conference in April in Painesville, Yost said he chose Lake County for the first-of-its-kind study in Ohio because so many local governments agreed to cooperate,

and around the state have equipment that isn't used frequently, but until a new law passed last year, the concept of sharing that equipment was prohibited, Yost said. Sometimes equipment is only used once a month or seasonally.

The Lake County Mayors and City Managers passed a resolution of support Monday of a shared services agreement developed by Yost's office.

The Lake County Public Service Directors Association also approved the agreement Oct. 18.

In a recent letter to Lake County and local government officials, Yost

wrote that he hopes the agreement will be adopted by each local government.

"While this may be ambitious, I am hopeful that the agreement will be adopted by Lake County and its 23 local governments by mid-December, enabling cost savings through enhanced sharing of specialized resources beginning with the new calendar year," Yost said.

The agreement addresses issues such as workers' compensation, tort immunity, reimbursement, reserved rights and other terms, Yost said.

Willoughby Hills Mayor Robert Weger, the association's president, believes the agreement can be useful.

"I just think it's something that's

good for everybody — the way it will be set up with the auditor's office and the software," Weger said.

Mentor City Manager Ken Filipiak said from his city's perspective, the agreement is straightforward and voluntary for each local government.

"If any community feels as though it's to their disadvantage or advantage over time, they can stay in or get out," Filipiak said.

An example he cited was communities sharing their snowplows or snow removal equipment, especially if one part of the county gets a heavier snowfall than another, which often is the case.

Filiplik said the reality is com-

munities already work together, but there was no organized system in place. So this can help local governments have a better idea of what might be available to them.

Michelle J. Stys, a regional liaison for Yost's office, said a database will be used to track inventory data with an ability to also track use and functionality.

She said Yost eventually will roll out the program used in Lake County as a model for the state.

"We've been working together and we have something to be very proud of," Stys said. "The auditor has stated that Lake County officials are at the forefront of shared services and this cements your position as leaders of the state."